Student Edition

California Education and the Environment Initiative

8

History-Social Science Standard 8.12.5.

Industrialization, Urbanization, and the Conservation Movement

California Education and the Environment Initiative

Approved by the California State Board of Education, 2010

The Education and the Environment Curriculum is a cooperative endeavor of the following entities:

California Environmental Protection Agency

California Natural Resources Agency

Office of the Secretary of Education

California State Board of Education

California Department of Education

California Integrated Waste Management Board

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Key Partners:

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Office of Education and the Environment

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Californians Join the Conservation Movement

The first European settlers who came to California saw a very different landscape than we see today. Our forests had trees so impressive that John Muir compared them to cathedrals; others saw them as timber and money. Our meadows exploded with colorful wildflowers. Our wild rivers were silver with salmon. Antelope and elk wandered the grasslands while condors filled the skies.

Grizzly bears were so numerous that they would become the symbol on our state flag. Settlers saw the abundance of natural resources in California as limitless and free for the taking. And take they did. They felled trees for their homesteads, plowed meadows to grow crops, and killed most of the large predators. The "pioneer mentality" viewed nature as something for humans to conquer.

Yosemite National Park, California

Taking Up the Cry

Early cries for nature conservation came first from the eastern states. One of these voices belonged to George Perkins Marsh, a congressman from Vermont. In 1847, he gave a speech on the destruction of nature. He called for people to conserve forests, soil, and water. The public viewed his opinions as radical. Western expansion continued at a steady rate as people forged ahead into the "frontier."

The following year, in 1848, gold was discovered in California. Fortune-seekers streamed to the state by the tens of thousands. Soon gold mining began to damage stream channels, choking downstream areas with silt. More people meant more trees cut, more animals hunted and, more areas cleared for crops and towns. Mining camps sprang up, neighboring towns grew into cities, and cities grew into industrialized urban centers.

During this time, authors like the poet and philosopher Henry

David Thoreau wrote about the beauty of nature. Thoreau published his influential book, *Walden*, in 1854. Thoreau saw great spiritual value in nature. He scorned the Gold Rush in California because he believed that materialism would lead to the ruin of society.

In 1864, George Perkins Marsh published a book called *Man and Nature*. This book, based on his earlier speech, began a "radical" cry for conservation in the East that echoed across the continent, reaching all the way to California. People began to notice the depletion of resources they had once viewed as limitless.

Also in 1864, Frederick Law Olmstead, one of the designers of Central Park in Manhattan, took a job as one of the first State Park Commissioners in California. The destruction caused by the Gold Rush disturbed him. He opposed the destruction of public land for private profit. He grew concerned about the fate of Yosemite State Park and its giant sequoia trees. In 1865, he wrote a report for the state. He stressed the importance of nature for mental and spiritual well-being. He wrote that the government has a responsibility to protect areas of scenic beauty for all the people. He argued that land destroyed by mining should be restored. He planned to submit his report to the state legislature; however, other commissioners critical of his ideas accused him of being a radical. Olmstead never submitted the report, and his visionary ideas went unrecognized until decades later.

Sequoia trees

The Cry Grows Louder

Year after year, the voices for conservation grew louder. John Muir arrived in the Yosemite Valley in 1869. This was the same year that the transcontinental railroad linked California to the rest of the United States, opening the path for economic development and more growth. This growth put more pressure on California's natural resources. Muir, a wilderness lover and author, wrote about the spiritual value

Aftermath of San Francisco earthquake

of nature. He warned of the dangers of private interests and the need for government protection. During his life, he wrote over 300 articles and books. *Century* magazine published many of his essays. This publicity influenced Congress to pass a law in 1890 that made Yosemite a national park. The same year, a census report stated that the "frontier line" had disappeared in the United States. Settlement had now spread completely from East to West.

The Government Acts

In 1891, Congress passed the Forest Reserves Act. This act gave the president power to set aside land for future use. However, a rift began to divide preservationists who wanted to preserve land untouched and conservationists who wanted to conserve it for future use. Muir was a preservationist. The following year, he founded the Sierra Club. This was the first organization dedicated solely to preservation. In 1897, Muir published two essays, "The American Forests" and "The Wild Parks and Reservations of the West." In these essays, he opposed the use of our nation's protected resources.

Theodore Roosevelt became president of the United States in 1901. Conservation was one of his priorities. His administration set aside more land than had any president before him. When Roosevelt visited Muir in Yosemite, they talked about their beliefs and ideas about how to conserve nature. Unlike Muir, however, Roosevelt believed that natural resources should be conserved for future use. In 1905, Roosevelt started the U.S. Forest Service. The new agency would manage forest reserves under the Department of Agriculture. This marked a shift from forest preservation toward timber management and production. Roosevelt appointed Gifford Pinchot as head of the U.S. Forest Service.

In 1906, an earthquake hit San Francisco. The fire that followed caused extensive damage because the city had limited water supplies and lacked strong water pressure. The city needed to find new water and electricity supplies. Plans were drawn to dam the Tuolumne River and flood the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park. John Muir led the Sierra Club

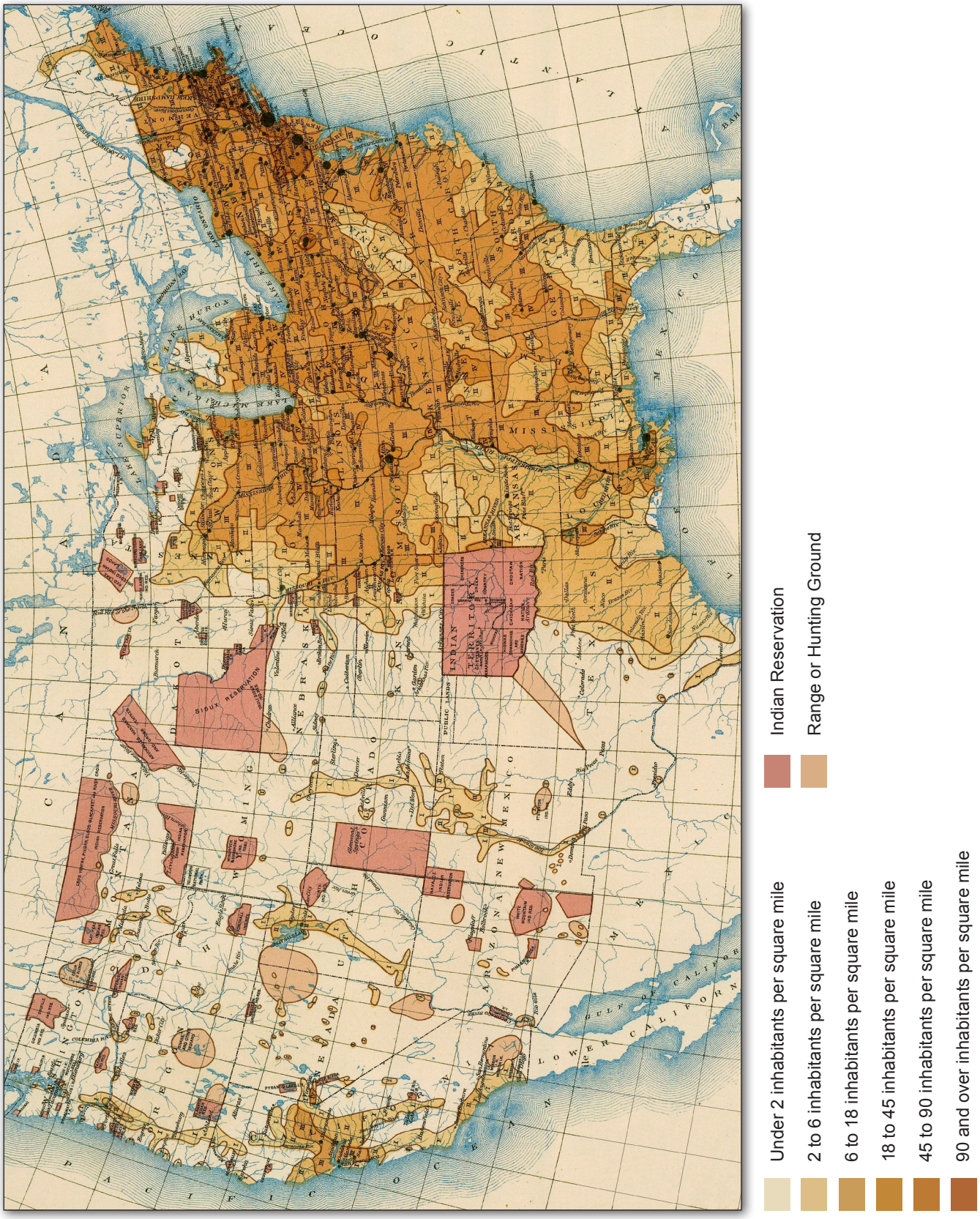
in a campaign to save Hetch Hetchy. Muir's editor, Robert Underwood, wrote an article titled "A High Price to Pay for Water." Published in *Century* magazine in 1908, it drew national attention. San Francisco newspapers criticized Muir as an "enemy of progress." The split between conservationists and preservationists widened. In 1910, Gifford Pinchot wrote, "Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number of people for the longest time." In 1913, Congress decided that providing water and power would do more for the greater good than preserving land, and it approved the Hetch Hetchy dam. The following year John Muir died.

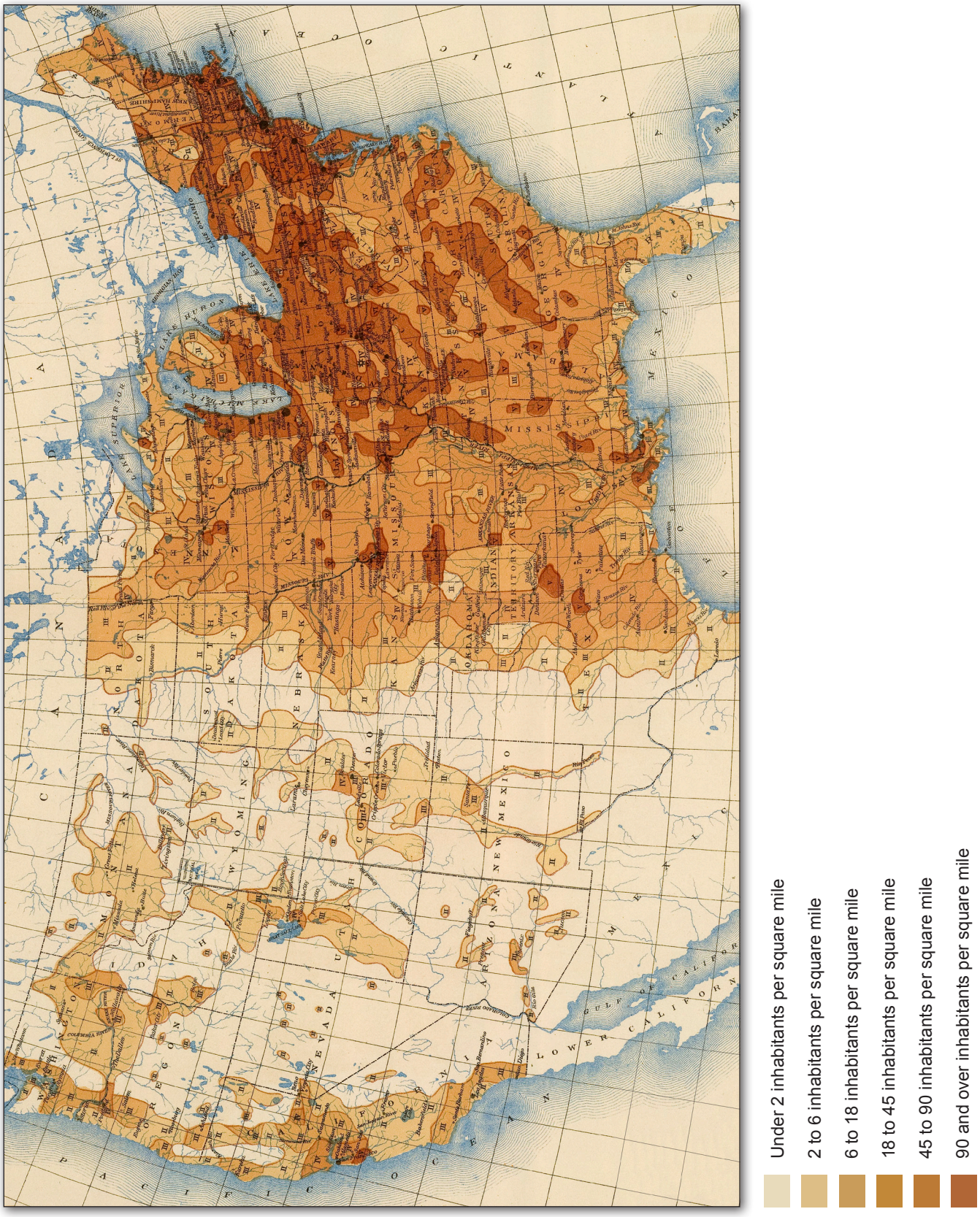
John Muir, ca. 1910

Muir's Legacy

The preservation movement that Muir had dedicated his life to did not die with him. Many others began to see the need to protect the nation's wild areas. People from around the country joined to campaign for a government agency to preserve national parklands. In 1916, the National Park Service was formed. Its mission: to protect and preserve parklands for future generations to enjoy.

The conservation movement in California has grown steadily since it began. Still, many of the same controversies exist today. Because our state is a desirable place to live, more people move here every day. One of California's attractions is our beautiful environment. We face many challenges as our population grows. Development will continue, and urban areas will expand. As human needs increase, so will industrialization. The difficulty lies in finding a balance between our use of natural resources and the conservation of our natural environment. The conservation movement will no doubt play a huge part in finding this balance.


Indian Reservation
Range or Hunting Ground
Under 2 inhabitants per square mile
2 to 6 inhabitants per square mile
6 to 18 inhabitants per square mile
18 to 45 inhabitants per square mile
45 to 90 inhabitants per square mile
90 and over inhabitants per square mile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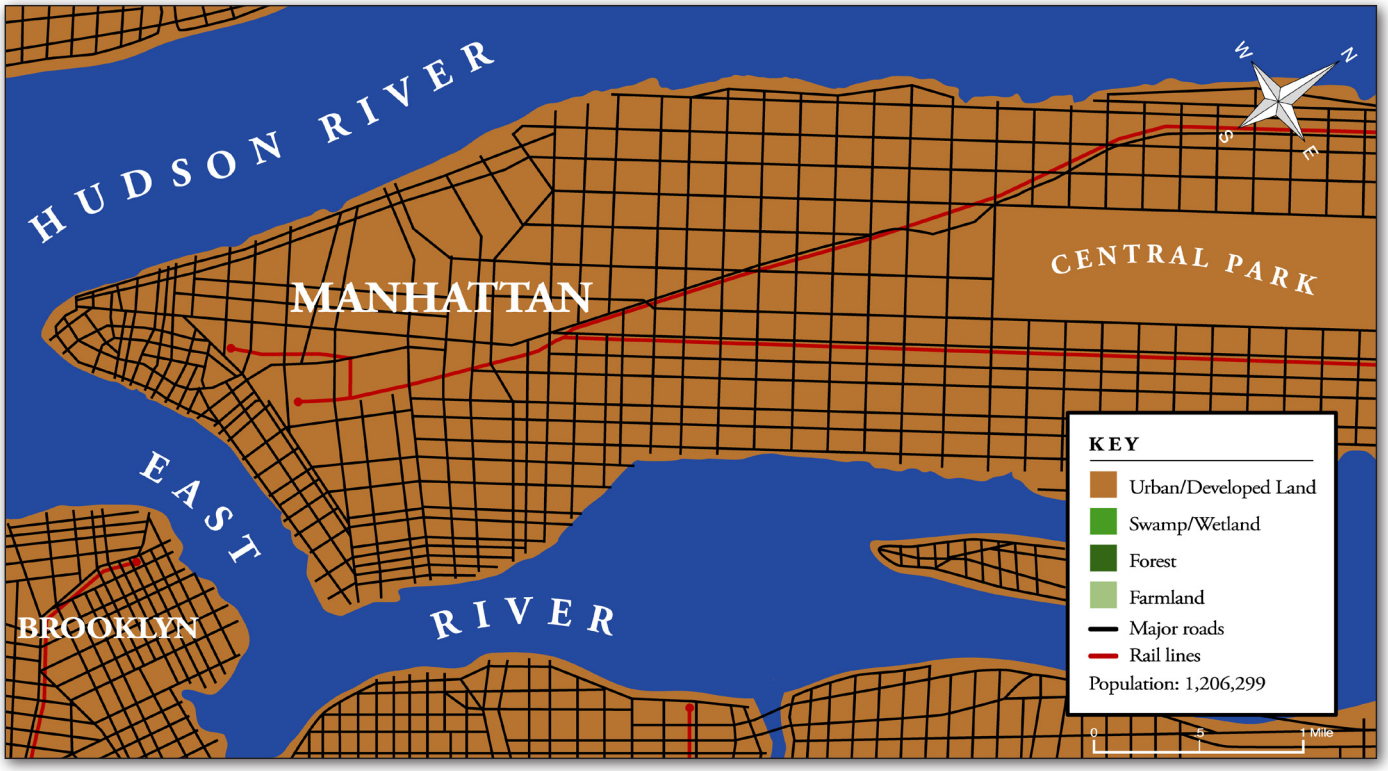
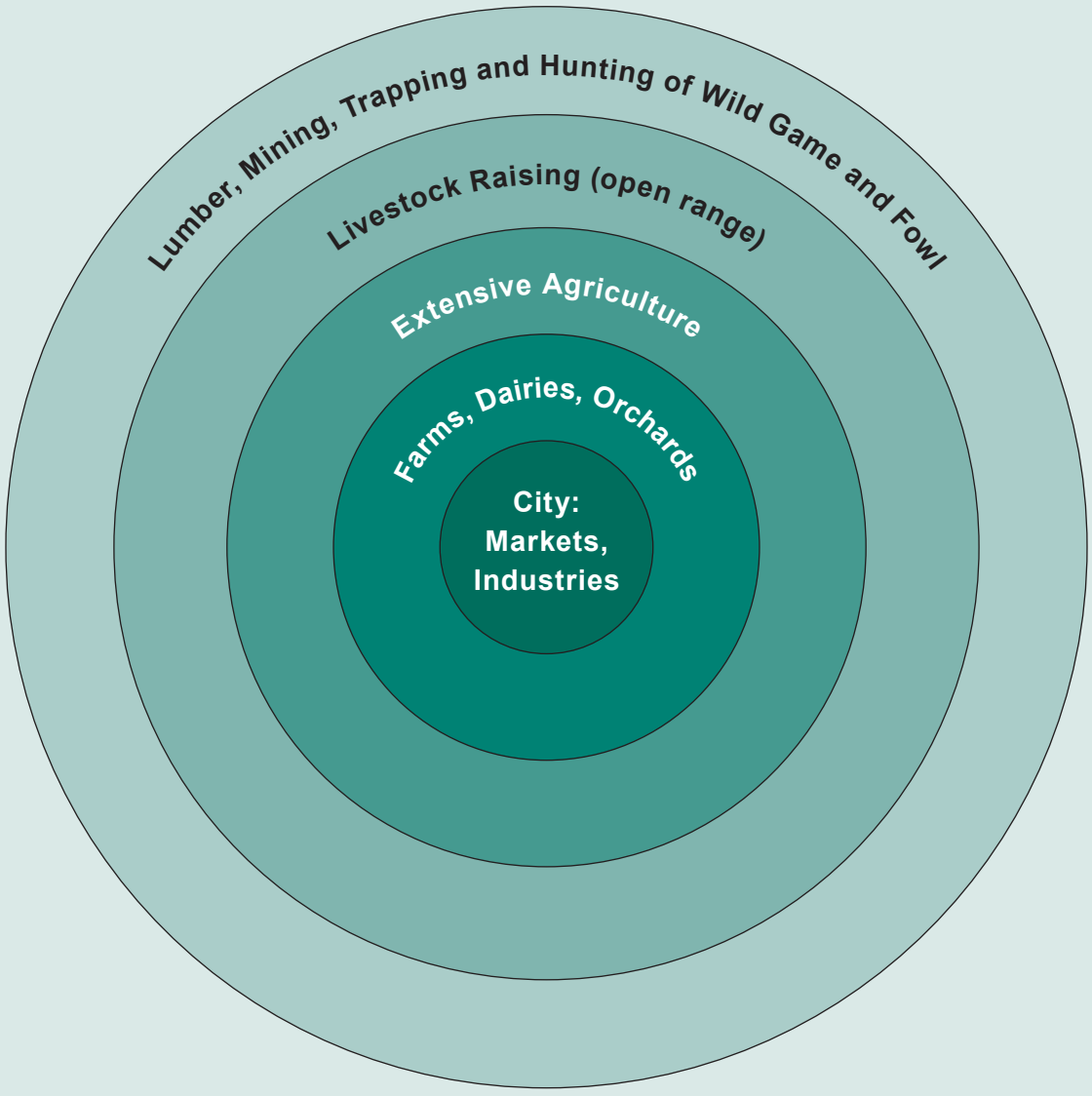
City of New York, 1850

City of New York, 1880





Based on von Thünen's model of an isolated state.

Declaration of the Conservation Conference

We the Governors of the States and Territories of the United States of America, in Conference assembled do hereby declare the conviction that the great prosperity of our country rests upon the abundant resources of the land chosen by our forefathers for their homes and where they laid the foundation of this great Nation.

We look upon these resources as a heritage to be made use of in establishing and promoting the comfort, prosperity, and happiness of the American People, but not to be wasted, deteriorated, or needlessly destroyed.

We declare our firm conviction that this conservation of our natural resources include the land on which we live and which yields our food; the living waters which fertilize the soil, supply power, and form great avenues of commerce; the forests which yield the materials for our homes, prevent erosion of the soil, and conserve the navigation and other uses of our streams; and the minerals which form the basis of our industrial life, and supply us with heat, light, and power.

Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir, 1903

President Theodore Roosevelt's Letter to Congress

January 22, 1909

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

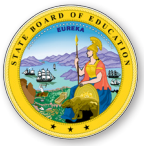
I transmit herewith a report of the National Conservation Commission, together with the accompanying papers. This report, which is the outgrowth of the conference of governors last May, was unanimously approved by the recent joint conference held in this city between the National Conservation Commission and governors of States, state conservation commissions, and conservation committees of great organizations of citizens. It is therefore in a peculiar sense representative of the whole nation and all its parts…

The great basic facts are already well known. We know that our population is now adding about one-fifth to its numbers in ten years, and that by the middle of the present century perhaps one hundred and fifty million Americans, and by its end very many millions more, must be fed and clothed from the products of our soil. With the steady growth in population and the still more rapid increase in consumption, our people will hereafter make greater and not less demands per capita upon all the natural resources for their livelihood, comfort, and convenience. It is high time to realize that our responsibility to the coming millions is like that of parents to their children, and that in wasting our resources we are wronging our descendants…

The function of our Government is to insure to all its citizens, now and hereafter, their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. If we of this generation destroy the resources from which our children would otherwise derive their livelihood, we reduce the capacity of our land to support a population, and so either degrade the standard of living or deprive the coming generations of their right to life on this continent…

Very sincerely,

President Theodore Roosevelt



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